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The Highlander

Thursday Jan 8 2026 | Issue 721

INSIDE: DOGSLED DERBY RETURNING TO PINESTONE PAGE 19

FREE

HCSA president Neil Vanderstoop said his club hopes to reinstate approximately 42 kilometres of local snowmobile trails it lost this year by next season. *Photo by Mike Baker.*

Snowmobile season going full throttle

By Mike Baker

With winter now in full swing, Haliburton County Snowmobile Association president Neil Vanderstoop said it's been the best start to a snowmobile season in the Highlands for several years.

"This is the earliest we've been out for some time – we've groomed up and down Trail 9 already, Trail 16 has been trimmed and taken care of too," Vanderstoop said. "We've also started staking some of our lakes – we've been on South Lake and Head Lake, Eagle Lake is getting done and soon we'll have Kennisis, Redstone and Haliburton lakes staked too."

He warned that no ice surface, regardless of how thick you think it might be, is safe to travel on unless it has been officially staked. Vanderstoop said there needs to be at least eight inches of ice before a lake is considered passable.

There was some good news in late December after the Ontario government announced it would be investing an additional $3.9 million – on top of the $1 million it had already committed – to restore 4,500 kilometres of lost snowmobile trails provincewide.

Vanderstoop said Snow Country District 6, which HCSA is a part of alongside 13 other cottage country clubs, lost 268 kilometres of trails this season after the OFSC announced cuts to 5,000 kilometres of trails last fall, citing funding challenges.

About 42 kilometres of trails in Haliburton County were cut, including the old TOP B112 northbound that could be accessed from Fleming Road in Minden. The former Trail 4 has now been renamed TOP B112, while plans are in the works to replace the old system.

With the influx of provincial cash, Vanderstoop said district figureheads have committed to reopening 268 kilometres of trails, hopefully for next season.

"The kilometres we lost, we may not get them back in the same spot, but we are committed to getting those kilometres of trails back," Vanderstoop said. "We're trying to develop a few little loops too – we have the Forest and Rail (FAR) Loop around Minden, Haliburton and Carnarvon and the Red Seven that runs into Haliburton by the Pinestone, but we'd like more."

With Ontario's snowmobile network contributing approximately

Continued **'District'** on page 2

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Highlander news

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The snowmobile season in Haliburton county is in full swing. *Submitted.*

District to reopen 268 kms of trails

Continued from page 1

$6 billion of economic activity annually, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott said the province is committed to working with OFSC on a long-term trail strategy to ensure the survival of Ontario's 30,000-plus kilometre network.

Vanderstoop said HCSA has sold more than 1,800 trail permits this season, noting the snowmobile season brings in about $7.5 million to the County economy annually.

With such a heavy presence of snowmobilers locally, the club president said it's vital that people make sure they're following the rules of the trails. That means obeying posted speed limits and road signs. Unless otherwise stated, speed limits are generally 50 km/h.

"I went down the rail line last week and had some men in front of me who should know better, but they barely hesitated at the stop signs," Vanderstoop said.

He recently hit the trails with a friend and his teenage daughter, who completed a virtual driver training course through the OFSC. Vanderstoop was so impressed by the way she conducted herself that he now thinks it would be a good idea for all fledgling snowmobile operators to follow suit.

The OFSC course is available to anyone 12 and older, though it's only a requirement for those who do not have a valid Ontario driver's licence.

"I think there probably is a need for some kind of training before anyone climbs on a snowmobile for the first time," Vanderstoop said. "It should almost be like getting a boating licence."

In Ontario, anyone operating a recreational motorized boat is legally required to carry a Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC), or other official proof of competency. The cards are mandatory for people of all ages, regardless of the size of the boat or horsepower of the engine. Operating a boat without a PCOC can result in fines of at least $250.

While there's rain in the forecast this week, Vanderstoop said he expects minimal impact to local trails.

"It'll just tighten up some of the snow we haven't gotten to yet. The base is good, the last ice storm we had took care of that," he said.

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Highlander news

Fearrey laments 'tough' 2026 budget

By Mike Baker

Dysart et al mayor Murray Fearrey told the rest of council "I've done a lot of these things, this is the worst I've seen in terms of flexibility," after presenting the township's first-ever mayoral budget Dec. 12, carrying a 5.83 per cent tax increase for local ratepayers.

This is the first set of financials tabled since Ontario Premier Doug Ford extended Strong Mayor Powers to Fearrey last May. He, and Minden Hills mayor Bob Carter, were two of 216 heads of council to be awarded greater control over municipal budgets last year.

At last month's meeting, Fearrey said he had spent weeks working alongside Dysart's new treasurer, Brayden Robinson, and department heads to find efficiencies in the budget, with an initial draft coming in at 7.2 per cent in October.

"But that didn't have any projects in it – no new roads, nothing. If we had stuck to that and then put everything else in that we need, it would have been an increase of 15 per cent or more. That's just not acceptable," Fearrey said.

The 5.83 per cent hike equates to an increase of $20.51 per $100,000 of a residential property's assessed value, or $46.98 on a median single-family home. For seasonal properties, that climbs to an annual increase of $83.08.

As a result, Robinson said the typical homeowner in Dysart will now pay $372.69 per $100,000 of assessment. He noted 78 per cent of the municipality's taxbase is residential.

On the commercial side, businessowners can expect an increase of $30.42 per $100,000 of assessment, with industrial property owners seeing a hike of $35.25 per $100,000.

"We made a lot of cuts to get here… but we're still at 5.83 per cent and that's not great in these times, with the way people are struggling, but it's about as good as we can do without drastic cuts to services," Fearrey said.

With Dysart's wastewater costs for the year reflecting a 5.1 per cent increase for ratepayers, to go with the 4.38 per cent hike already approved by the County, Fearrey said it's going to be a taxing year for property owners. He laid the blame at the feet of the provincial government.

Dysart mayor Murray Fearrey presented the township's first-ever mayoral budget in December. *File.*

"It's a slippery slope we're on. There's no end to municipal debt, the way the province is funding things right now. Unless they find another source to give us, everything is on the property tax. That's not fair," Fearrey said. "There's all kinds of things they could share with us a little bit to take us out of this hole, but they haven't done that."

This is only the first draft of the budget, with council having an opportunity to provide further feedback Jan. 9, so none of these figures are set in stone.

The numbers

The township's operating expenses are increasing by more than $1 million from 2025, up to $17.76 million. The biggest driver, Robinson said, is an 11 per cent increase to policing costs, with the OPP billing an extra $462,061 for services.

Dysart's wage-related costs are up 5.4 per cent, or $389,204, with an additional $186,794 going towards maintaining the municipal fleet. The remaining $119,188 is earmarked for landfill costs, with increases to garbage tonnage and hauling costs.

The most significant spend on the operating side is in the transportation department, accounting for 25.5 per cent of costs ($4.5 million), with protection services just behind at 24.21 per cent ($4.3 million). The environmental budget, for landfill costs, accounts for 13.6 per cent ($2.4 million); parks and recreation at 13.4 per cent ($2.4 million); and administration at 13.3 per cent ($2.35 million).

Robinson told council there's $8.96 million of capital project expenditures included in the budget, with $2 million funded through taxation, $4.5 million through new long-term debt, $1.86 million through reserves and $495,611 via federal and provincial grants.

Robinson said Dysart will be at 16 per cent of its annual debt repayment limit under this budget - the province stipulates municipalities cannot exceed 25 per cent though Robinson said he'd be more comfortable capping it at 15 per cent. The township will pay $503,000 servicing its debt in 2026.

A good chunk of the capital budget, at $3.8 million, is going towards the replacement of the Redstone Brook, Barry's Bay and Head Lake Park bridges; $1.28 million is earmarked for the rehabilitation of sidewalks on Highland Street; $866,100 set aside for vehicle replacements, including a new tandem plow, one-tonne pickup and fire truck; $720,643 needed for retaining wall repairs, waste bin retrofits, transfer station design at the Haliburton and Harcourt landfills, and capping at the Kennisis Lake and West Guilford landfills.

Just over $1.5 million is being spent resurfacing a dozen roads in the community, including the entirety of the Halbiem Crescent subdivision and portions of Fred Jones Road, Wenona Lake Road, Meadowview Road, Industrial Park Road, Eastern Avenue, Pine Avenue, Humber Avenue, Dome Street, Harmony Road and Mink Road.

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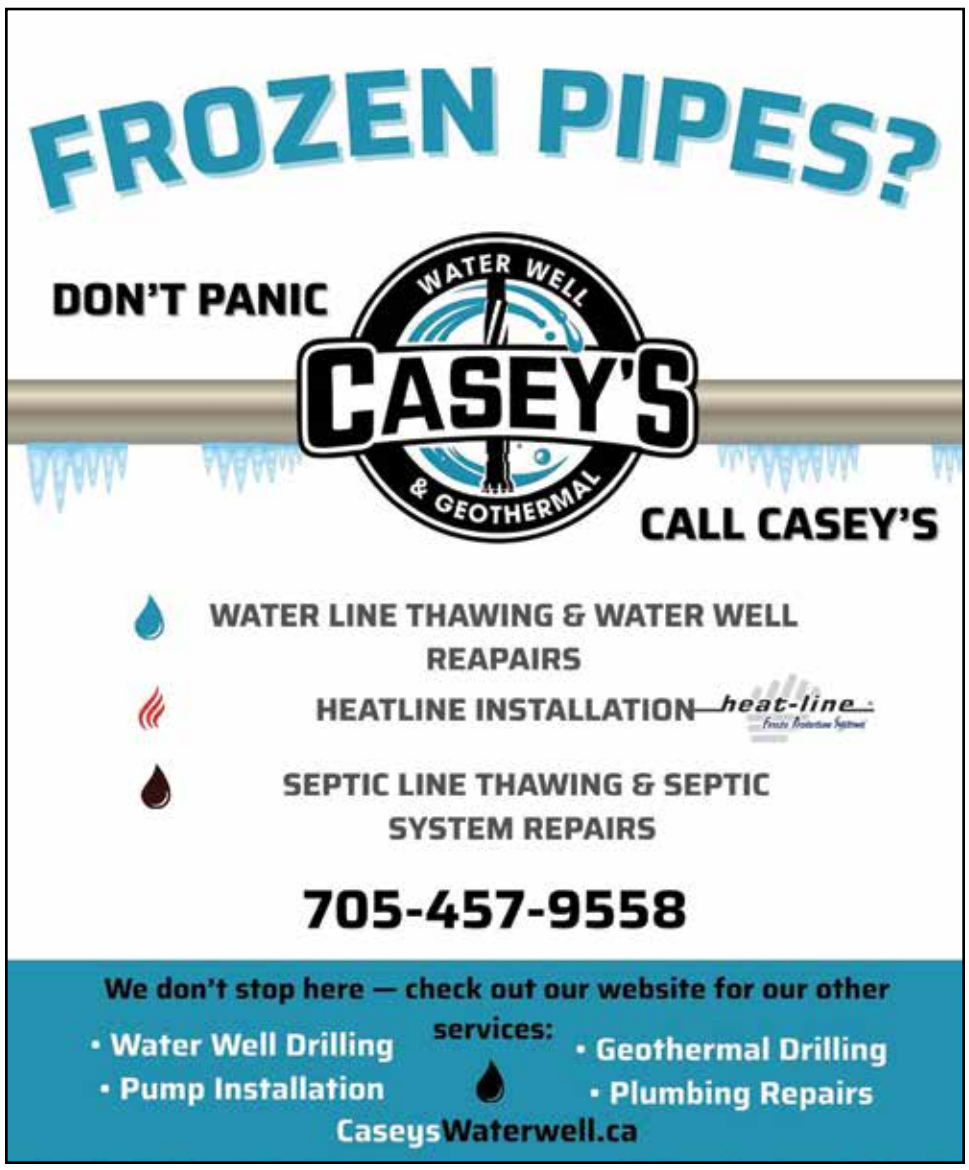
Highlander news



Health unit offering free radon test kits

By Lisa Gervais

Lakelands Public Health is offering 750 free radon test kits to community members this year, as part of the Evict Radon National Study.

Community members who receive a kit must agree to be a part of the study, set up the device for at least 91 days, and then send the kit (pre-paid envelope included) to be analyzed.

"The Lakelands Public Health region has been identified as a priority for the researchers at Evict Radon – not necessarily because there are high levels of radon in our area, but because there is insufficient data about the radon levels in our area," said Dr. Thomas Piggott, medical officer of health and chief executive officer at Lakelands Public Health.

He added, "the study results will help us learn more about radon levels in our community to support future programming so that we can work with municipalities to better understand and mitigate local risks."

Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium found in rocks and soil. It can seep into cracks, gaps, and openings in a home's foundation. When radon enters confined spaces, like a house, it can build up and become harmful. Radon is invisible, odourless, and tasteless, so testing is the only way to know how much radon is in one's home and whether action is needed.

When inhaled, radon traps radioactive particles in the lungs. This creates damage and, over years, can develop into lung cancer. In Canada, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer – after tobacco smoke.

Test kits are limited to one per household and must be picked up by a person who lives in the residence. Test kits are available while quantities last, and will be distributed "first come, first served."

Radon test kits can be picked up at public libraries although the health unit said distribution locations are subject to change, and new locations may be added.

Visit LakelandsPH.ca/radon or contact the office to determine the location closest to you.

Radon kits can also be purchased from EvictRadon.org. To learn more about the health effects of radon, visit LakelandsPH.ca/radon.

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Highlander news

Sir Sam's new lift for 2027

By Lisa Gervais

Sir Sam's Ski/Ride has announced that a new chairlift will be coming to Haliburton's iconic family ski hill as part of its ongoing modernization plan.

Installation of a new 4CLF Doppelmayr quad chairlift will begin in the spring of 2026 and is due to open to the public at the beginning of the 2026-2027 season.

The lift will start from the Sir Sam's base chalet and travel to the top of the Kingston run. As part of the construction process, the height of the hill will be extended nearly three metres, and a new access run will be created to the far side of the hill where a third chairlift is located.

General manager Dave Bishop said the new additions, along with other upgrades already completed, will dramatically increase lift capacity at the ski resort and enable Sir Sam's to continue its 60-plus year legacy of being one of the best family ski resorts in Ontario.

The new quad chairlift is being installed on the site of the previous Eagle View double chairlift, which was retired in 2025, along with the Red Rocket chairlift, after 54 and 43 years of service respectively.

The older lifts had reached their servicable lifespan and had not been able to operate with any measurable frequency in recent years. The new Doppelmayr quad chairlift will be able to welcome more skiers and snowboarders to the main hill and "will ensure that Sir Sam's continues to be favoured as a truly accessible ski hill, offering short lift lines, a variety of terrain, and the perfect atmosphere for beginner and experienced ski and ride enthusiasts to enjoy winter in Haliburton," Bishop added.

The ski hill is getting a new chairlift for next season. *File.*

Sir Sam's Ski/Ride was founded in 1965 by the Bishop family and is now a community-owned and operated ski resort. It boasts 12 runs, five lifts, a terrain park, and modern snowmaking systems.

See more at www.sirsams.com info@sirsams.com

OPP NEWS

Snowmobile accidents

Haliburton Highlands OPP say on Jan. 4 at 8:54 p.m. a single vehicle collision was reported involving a snow machine striking a tree near Kennisis Lake Road.

OPP said the male rider was transported to an area hospital by EMS with life-threatening injuries. Air Ornge then transported the man to a trauma centre in Toronto.

Peterborough Scanner Feed first reported the accident, saying emergency crews responded to Watts Road and Kennisis Lake Road.

The source said it was reported the snowmobiler, who was wearing a helmet, struck a tree and was unresponsive, and Ornge was requested.

"Paramedics are on scene at the road but are waiting for some snowmobiles to arrive to take them to the patient. The first paramedic has gone in on a snowmobile, the second paramedic will be going in when the next snowmobile arrives on scene," the page reported.

Peterborough Scanner Feed reported Jan. 2 that Ornge landed at a helipad near Wolf Lake after another snowmobile accident, this one in Haliburton Forest.

They said one patient was transported by land ambulance to the nearest hospital and one departed in the helicopter to a trauma centre.

"It was reported the snowmobile driver struck an unknown object. It sounds like he was ejected off the snowmobile … The passenger of the snowmobile is not reporting any injuries at this time," Peterborough Scanner Feed said.

Arson charge in island fire

A man has been charged with arson following an investigation into a fire on an island property in early September.

Haliburton Highlands OPP said on Dec. 31 that they had arrested John MacFadden, 47, from Bradford and charged him with arson – damage to property contrary to section 434 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

OPP said that on Sept. 10, 2025, they, and local emergency services personnel, responded to a structure fire on Echo Island on Kawagama Lake, Algonquin Highlands.

They said, "the fire was determined to be suspicious in nature and members of the Haliburton Highlands crime unit began investigating the incident as a possible arson."

MacFadden was released from police custody and is scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Minden at a future date.

RIDE results

The Haliburton Highlands Detachment conducted 139 RIDE events, on top of their regular traffic enforcement duties, during the Festive RIDE campaign from Nov. 20, 2025 – Jan. 1, 2026. OPP said, "this enforcement helped remove two impaired drivers off of roads patrolled by the Haliburton Detachment. Every impaired driver removed is a success."

(OPP news compiled by Lisa Gervais)

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COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

- January 8 - Regular Council Meeting
- January 22 - Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

PROGRAM REGISTRATION

- The new winter drop-in program schedule started on Monday. Take a look at the full schedule online at www.mindenhills.ca/recreation or in person at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena.
- There is still room in some of our registered programs for adults and youth. Take a look at program offerings online or at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

When a winter storm is expected, all municipalities have a plan. Drivers need to have their own plan. It is important to delay unnecessary travel during significant storms to give plows time to do their jobs. It's also safer for drivers.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Woman wins human rights case after harassment

By Mike Baker

An Ontario woman employed by a cottage country tourism operator for two months in 2017 has successfully sued her former employer after being sexually harassed by the company's owner.

Chelsea Cloutier was employed by Back Country Tours Inc. from May 15, 2017 to June 16, 2017. In her early 20s at the time, Cloutier said she was repeatedly accosted by her boss, Dudley Hookong, who was the sole owner, director and operator of Back Country.

Online records for the company state it offered jet ski and ATV rentals to people in Haliburton County and Muskoka. The company was operated from a property overlooking Lake of Bays on Hwy. 60 in Dwight.

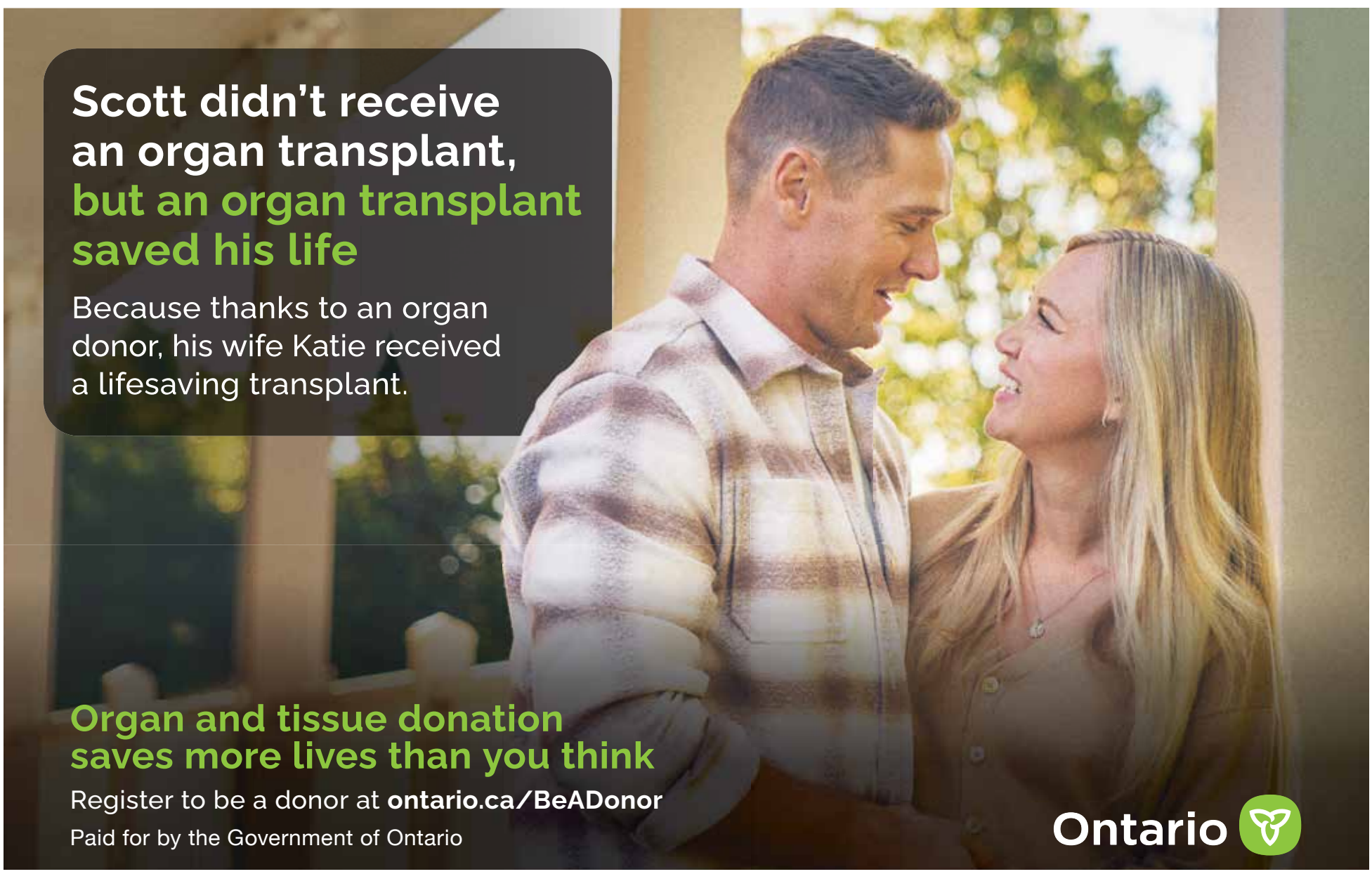
Cloutier told the tribunal Hookong behaved in ways that made her feel uncomfortable, manipulated, belittled, objectified, sexually harassed, anxious and unsafe. She said there were numerous incidents that "created a poisoned work environment" until her resignation.

"On numerous occasions [Hookong said] he would take care of [Cloutier's] food and shelter and manipulated circumstances so that… she was forced to share accommodation with him in an on-site RV, or when on a business trip only one hotel room would be booked," the tribunal transcript reads.

On two such trips, Hookong booked accommodations that resulted in Cloutier and Hooking sharing a bed... he would text her when he was away to say how much he missed her, pressured her to drink alcohol, and routinely sexually solicited her.

Cloutier was awarded $32,500 by HRTO, with the compensation for "injury to dignity, feelings and self-respect." By the time of the HRTO hearing, Hookong had passed away, but his estate was named in the human rights application in response to his actions.

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre supported Cloutier throughout the process, with lawyer Jamie McGinnis saying, "this case puts predatory employers on notice that a poisoned work environment where a culture of sexual harassment and discrimination against women is nurtured, is unacceptable."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Angus Sullivan in the laboratory at University Health Network. *Submitted.*

Haliburtonian trying to strike gold with cancer research

By Lisa Gervais

Angus Sullivan is asked what he is doing on the day of an interview with *The Highlander*, and he responds, "just another day of chemistry for me."

But, it's a little more than that.

Sullivan is currently involved in leading-edge medical research at University Health Network (UHN) in Toronto. He is in the midst of a two-year scholarship given to 100 of the world's leading early career scientists. It's known as the Canada Leads 100 Challenge; with funding generated by the UHN Foundation and The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

UHN is a major teaching and research hospital network based in Toronto, affiliated with the University of Toronto. It's known as Canada's top research hospital, encompassing sites such as Toronto General, Toronto Western, and Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

Sullivan goes on to explain he is doing research and development chemistry.

"So, my work focuses on gold nanoclusters, and I'm trying to design them to fight diseases like cancer, and use them for other biomedical applications."

At the moment, he is making nanoclusters; metal nanoparticles smaller than one nanometer in size. "They're really good at absorbing certain types of radiation. I'm trying to design them to specifically go into cancer cells in order to make radiation therapy more effective."

The specific nanoclusters that he's making first emerged in 2019. "So, I've been kind of at the front of developing the chemistry for these ones … these nanoclusters are a lot more stable than previous nanoclusters that have been made. Our idea is that since they're more stable, that makes them a lot better for biomedical application; where you don't want them breaking down in the body, losing effectiveness, or creating toxicity."

Sullivan graduated from Haliburton Highlands Secondary School in 2015, before moving onto Trent University for his undergraduate degree, then Queen's University for his PhD, graduating in January 2025. He did post-doctorate work at the Queen's lab for a couple of months before joining the UHN lab on June 30, 2025.

He describes his first six months as "really great." He said he is a chemist by training, but is now in a medicine-biochemistry environment. "I'm kind of like a fish out of water … so it has been a lot of learning for me, and they have been very generous in their time and expertise in helping me get that knowledge." He added it is a welcoming place and everyone is passionate about fighting diseases, and trying to contribute to medicine.

More to do

Asked what his days look like, he said, "having a lot of short-term goals, that when put together, will get me to where I want to go. There's just so much in research that you can't control. My overall goal is eventually getting one of these nanoclusters to be a drug, to be used in humans but that's further away right now. So, my initial focus is smaller; targeting where I want to get it to go into the cells I want it to go, and find reliable methods to get these targeting molecules on the clusters."

They are injecting mice with cancer cells to induce tumours and then using the nanoclusters to try to treat the tumours. "We have successfully treated these mice with cancer cells with nanoclusters. We are able to remove their tumours successfully, but there is a lot more to do."

Mr. Zondervan taught him chemistry at Hal High, but Sullivan said he had always been "inherently driven. I was always so focused on getting results and having success, even from a really young age."

That being said, he was not always interested in chemistry per se, but science, and research and learning. It was in his undergrad years, he discovered a passion for chemistry.

"It was just something that was consistently challenging for me, which I really liked. There are a lot of layers of learning in it. Once you've learned the basics, it's kind of like you're in a playground…if you are in a lab, you can create whatever you want and make new things and that kind of really appealed to me."

Asked if he thinks about what his life work might mean one day, Sullivan said "I'm not getting too caught up in the future. I don't want to miss what's going on right now. I focus on every day, do the right things every day, and that will lead to success."

A MESSAGE FROM
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Editorial opinion

TheHighlander
Published by The Highlander Newspaper Limited

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To tell the story of Haliburton County each week.

To be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas.

To report on issues, people and events important to the community.

To reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of The Highlands.

To encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day.

OUR STAFF

PUBLISHER
Laurie Johnson
laurie@thehighlander.ca

EDITORIAL
Lisa Gervais, Editor
editor@thehighlander.ca

Mike Baker, Asst. Editor
mike@thehighlander.ca

SALES
Dawn Poissant
dawn@thehighlander.ca

Aidan McKnight
aidan@thehighlander.ca

BUSINESS MANAGER
Glenda Mumford
admin@thehighlander.ca

AD DESIGN | LAYOUT
David Partridge, Designer
production@thehighlander.ca

DISTRIBUTION
Walt Griffin

CONTACT

705-457-2900
123 Maple Avenue, Box 1024
Haliburton, Ontario, K0M 1S0

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Embracing change

By Lisa Gervais

Readers and advertisers might have noticed we're mixing things up a bit at *The Highlander.*

In late November, we launched a survey, asking you what you think about the paper; seeking honest feedback on what we could be doing better. It's the first time we've done that in the *Highlander's* soon-to-be 15-year history. We launched the County's independent newspaper on Oct. 7, 2011. In that time, staff have come and gone but our mission statement has never changed.

It remains, 'to tell the story of Haliburton County each week. To be a source of information and inspiration through stories and ideas. To report on issues, people and events important to the community. To reflect and promote pride in the culture, people and landscape of The Highlands. To encourage Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day."

The newspaper world was a very different place 15 years ago. While social media had begun its encroachment, it was not as insidious as it is today. Nowadays, it is difficult to know what is real and what is fabricated when scrolling any social media platform. Entities such as Google have decided to do your research for you; often offering up inaccurate information. Nobody is policing social media and it has become downright dangerous.

We have always implored Highlanders to do their sleuthing on credible websites, not rely on Google summations.

And we have long espoused the importance of supporting local media. We are blessed to live in a County where there are choices, and some of them free.

One of the reasons we circulated a survey was to see how we could entice some readers and advertisers to use our product. To date, we have had hundreds of responses. Most of them are filled with praise for *The Highlander*. Although we naturally welcome that, we do want to hear from our detractors. Why don't you like us?

In the new year, we'll be compiling responses to see what changes are needed as we head into 2026.

Some might have also noted that we have launched a podcast. Entitled, 'what the Haliburton?' it's something we are doing weekly. If you go to thehighlander.ca – or other places you get your podcasts - you'll find some archived recordings.

To date, we've tackled some pretty prickly issues. We have discussed the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project; housing; whether or not the County is becoming too much like Muskoka; how social media is hurting the Highlands; whether or not it's time for amalgamation; and Dysart et al's contentious proposed shoreline changes. It's been an opportunity to brings guests into our studio and do a deeper dive into some important local topics.

The podcast is another way to get the news to you – without having to wait for the paper on newsstands, or in your inbox every Thursday.

The survey, and the podcast, are the first of two strategies now underway. There will be more to come, so stay tuned.

Change is inevitable, especially in our line of work, and we are embracing that so we can be around for readers and advertisers for another 15 years to come, and hopefully long into the future. After all, is Google going to have a mission statement encouraging Highlanders to believe in themselves, in our community, and in their power to make our place in the world better every day?

SAWDUST STORIES

Remembering Amber

By Darren Lum

Amber Czech. Remember the name.

She is the acetylene torch that will blaze through the dark corners of unsafe worksites - a touchstone reminding us that safety and inclusion are not optional. They are the backbone of every crew and the foundation for a brighter future.

The 20-year-old Minnesota woman was allegedly killed on Nov. 11 by a co-worker at Advanced Process Technologies in Cokato. It has been reported that a 40-year-old man, David Bruce Delong, attacked Czech with a sledgehammer, reportedly saying he did not like her. Police attempted life-saving measures, but she was pronounced dead at the scene. Delong was taken into custody without incident and faces second-degree murder charges. The motive remains unclear, but speculation misses the point. The key takeaway is safety.

The trades face persistent labour shortages. Whether or not this tragedy could have been prevented is now secondary to the urgent question: how do we ensure every worksite is safe? Representation matters, for safety and equity. In Ontario, more than 14,000 women work directly on the tools, yet women account for only about five per cent of on-site construction trades workers. Nationally, women remain significantly underrepresented in skilled trades occupations, making up roughly five per cent of skilled trades workers, even as their participation slowly increases. Across the broader construction sector - including off-site, administrative, and professional roles - women account for approximately 13 to 14 per cent of the workforce. The experience on the ground helps explain why progress is slow.

Surveys conducted by the Ontario Building and Construction Tradeswomen report that about 52 per cent have experienced harassment at work. Structural barriers persist as well, including ill-fitting personal protective equipment, inadequate washrooms, and limited access to childcare, all restricting participation and retention. Diversity isn't only about gender.

Statistics Canada reports visible minorities are underrepresented among certified journey-persons relative to their share of the Canadian population. This reduces opportunity, constrains the labour pool, and weakens safety culture at a time when the trades urgently need workers.

I know these barriers personally. Growing up in Scarborough in the 1980s, jokes and slurs bounced off school hallways and concrete courtyards. I never looked "Canadian" to the haters. My grandmother arrived from China in 1908, caring for three young children before she could build a new life in Toronto. Despite my family's deep roots, the sense of not belonging shadowed my youth. I haven't faced harassment in my current job, yet the memories remain - a shadow that reminds me silence allows danger to linger. Harassment, left unchecked, can escalate. Safety is everyone's responsibility: management, supervisors, and co-workers. The best teams are like families, and families watch out for each other.

My father, a draughtsman, occasionally faced racism in the trades. It didn't dissuade me from entering the workforce, but reminded me of the vigilance required. Employers across the trades are eager to attract more workers. Let's ensure everyone - regardless of gender or race - feels included. Narrowing the labour pool limits opportunity; widening it strengthens teams, boosts morale, and improves safety. No one heading to a job site should feel fear. Safety begins with all of us, and it starts by speaking up for each other.

Amber Czech's story is more than a statistic. She is a spark - a reminder that workplaces can and must be safer, more inclusive, and more humane for everyone who steps onto the site.

Editorial opinion

LETTERS

Time to amalgamate?

Dear editor,

The perennial topic of the amalgamation of municipalities in Haliburton County was discussed in a recent *Highlander* podcast. Many believe that for a better quality of life for its citizens and the future economic viability of the area, amalgamation is inevitable.

Our civic-minded and loyal local councillors and mayors are not the experts that we need to consult. Most of them are going to lose their position as councillor, and if asked will be negative about the idea. They will tell you "there are no cost savings."

Our neighbours to the south in Victoria County amalgamated 13 municipalities into the City of Kawartha Lakes, and services have improved, municipal infrastructure is better maintained and protected, costs have been reduced, the smaller communities have improved water, sewage and public parks and other permanent infrastructure, and families thrive. Taxes did not go down but everyone has improved services and better communities, especially the smaller communities.

The idea that your local councillor has to live within a three-kilometre radius is a myth. With all due respect, they work from home and some don't get out much.

If the County plans to attract families and deliver services to these families, there needs to be more municipal responsibility - a vision, a plan, and the budget to do better things to try to catch up to the rest of the world.

There is a way for Haliburton County taxpayers and families to get more for their taxes - amalgamate. We need the yearly tax hike to cover more than the salary and benefit increase for the municipal office staff and road workers - we need to move ahead or fall behind.

Under amalgamation, there will be fewer excuses for poor roads, delays in building and sewage inspections, sidewalk, trails, parks and public infrastructure and poor maintenance, landfill fees and other issues, confusion on STR's, arguments over property rights, enforcement of bylaws, and the biggest problem of wasted assets that I refer to as the "tail wagging the dog" which is the feeling that is hard to ignore after watching several long council meetings.

Bradley Sales
City of Kawartha Lakes

Nice Christmas present

Dear editor,

To begin, I bear no animosity to Hydro One employees in general. In fact, in most instances, I admire the work they do.

However, on Dec. 18, Hydro One employees cut down a danger tree on the road allowance in front of our manicured property. The tree was cut up and left in a huge ramshackle pile on the roadside.

When I asked Hydro One when they would clean it up, they told me in no uncertain terms, they don't clean up and I should hire someone or contact the Municipality of Dysart et al. The municipality advises they don't have the resources.

Apparently, mine is not an isolated incident. It appears to be their modus operandi 'slash and run.' I understand it is an offence under the Highway Traffic Act to deposit any debris on any public road in the province. Is Hydro One exempt? If so, why? If I did this same thing, I would be required, by law, to clean it up.

I'm 87 years old and try as best I can to keep my property and the adjoining road allowance as neat as possible, then along comes Hydro One to destroy this image. Nice Christmas present.

Jack Sinclair
Haliburton

Informed choice

Dear editor,

Re: Letter 'I vaccinate for you' *The Highlander*, Dec. 18; to clarify that there are risks of 'unregulated' natural supplements - that is a myth.

There is no such thing as unregulated health supplements. Look for the labels on all health care products available. That is a result of strict regulations. Health care products are not 'snake oil.'

What the natural health care industry does not need is more government regulations that will limit health care choices and make them more expensive and out of reach of many people.

As with anything you are taking, it must be done by reading about and researching the product thoroughly plus consulting with health care professionals to decide if the product is for you.

If you want to have health care products readily available and at a fair price, then supporting not adding additional, onerous government regulations, is a good, informed choice.

Darlene Buckingham
Tory Hill

'Snake oil'

Dear editor,

Re the letter, 'I vaccinate for you' by Dr. Nell Thomas:

Ever since the controversy surrounding the COVID-19 MRNA vaccine, informed citizens have learned to inquire about the side effects of new medical products that hit the market.

Otherwise, by reporting only favourable outcomes, the vaccine proponent can be accused of promoting 'snake oil.'

To make life miserable, it need take but one wealthy health practitioner to sue for professional defamation.

That might just put an end to the use of abusive language in the field of Canadian medicine.

Douglas Smith PhD
Haliburton County

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Shirley Davison-Mark of Haliburton looked up to see this barred owl sitting in the trees.

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2025 year in review

'Mooch.'

The great ice storm.

JANUARY

Cash for councillors
Octogenarian County coun. Murray Fearrey raised the idea of increasing councillor salaries to attract municipal candidates in 2026. During a Dec. 11, 2024 County of Haliburton budget discussion, Fearrey said, "it's not my nature to advocate more spending, but I have asked the CAO to get some comparators for us. Our average age here is over 70 and we're not attracting younger people because they can't leave their jobs and come to work and do this job."

Dropping Highland Yard baton
Haliburton County's iconic Highland Yard fundraising race was looking for a new home in January, 2025. Places for People (P4P) announced it was relinquishing the charitable event. With the help of past board member, and avid runner, Jack Russel, P4P took over the Highland Yard in 2012, going on to raise more than $200,000 for the housing charity. However, COVID delivered a punch, forcing organizers to go to virtual events for three years. Rotaract had a crack at organizing the 2023 race, but found it to be a lot of work for little return. No one stepped up in 2025 to take it on.

Don't feed 'Mooch'
Monika Melichar of Woodlands Wildlife Sanctuary was advising people not to interact with, or give 'Mooch,' or any deer, food – following 'Mooch looking for food at the Independent in Haliburton. "He is looking for hand-outs and people are feeding and petting him and he is becoming way too tame," Melichar said. "It's important that we get the word out that this is like killing him with kindness, and it's only fun until someone gets hurt."

Scott re-elected
Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott felt premier Doug Ford had no choice but to call a provincial election 15 months early, given U.S. president Donald Trump's repeated threats to implement tariffs on Canadian imports. Seeking a seventh term in office, Scott said it was important Ontarians used their voice – and votes – to select who they wanted to lead the province through what she expected would be a tumultuous four years. Scott went on to easily win the election.

FEBRUARY

New mammography unit arrived in February.

Mammography unit arrives
Retired Toronto firefighter Steve Yurkiw said nothing was going to stop him visiting the Haliburton hospital Feb. 3 for the delivery of the community's new $800,000 CT mammography unit. Yurkiw said he's experienced first-hand the benefits of Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) expanding its diagnostic imaging over the past year. The hospital invested more than $6 million on a new CT scanner, mammography unit, and x-ray machine.

Housing for Minden
It was announced Minden Hills was getting $2.4 million in provincial funding to put towards a housing development on Hwy. 35, just south of the legion. Mayor Bob Carter said that on Jan. 27, the Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Housing Corporation (KLHHC) learned it had received $3.2 million in total for two housing projects. Carter said one is in Kawartha Lakes, but the other $2.4 million is for the Minden project. He said the money was "very, very welcome." Work is underway.

Drugs busts
After another major drug trafficking investigation led to four more arrests in Haliburton village Feb. 4, 2025, Haliburton Highlands OPP interim detachment commander, Mike Cavanagh, said police are investing significant time and resources targeting the illegal narcotics supply in the County. Approximately 25 officers from the detachment, the Haliburton Highlands and Kawartha Lakes OPP Community Street Crime Unit, and OPP Tactics and Rescue Unit, searched a pair of properties on Highland Street and Pine Avenue earlier this month, confiscating weapons and approximately $50,000 worth of drugs.

LTC to Minden
Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) confirmed plans to move all Highlands' long-term care beds to Minden in the next five years. Then CEO Veronica Nelson said an application to expand from 62 beds at Minden's Hyland Crest to a 160-bed facility would be submitted to the Ministry of Long-Term Care (LTC) by the end of March 2025. If approved, HHHS will close the 30-bed Highland Wood home in Haliburton. It's estimated the project will cost at least $49 million.

MARCH

The County got growth projections.

We're getting older
Haliburton County's population could grow anywhere from 0.9 to 1.5 per cent a year by 2051. That, coupled with the fact it's estimated the percentage of people 65 and older will increase to 45 per cent of the population, up from 35 per cent, will present challenges for Highlands' governments. Consultants, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., on Feb. 26, 2025, tabled a long-term population, household, and employment growth forecast for the County and its area municipalities.

Business closure
Haliburton's Handmade Heaven – a business that opened its doors July 27, 2024 – suddenly closed. So, too, did all other outlets across Ontario. The space at 160 Highland St. was placed up for rent, the store's phone number was no longer in service, and social media pages had been taken down. *The Highlander* was unable to contact owner Sam Milne.

Changes for 911 calls
Haliburton County residents were being advised about a new ambulance dispatch system and how it would impact them. Starting March 26, 2025, Lindsay Central Ambulance Communications Centre, which dispatches paramedics working for Haliburton County Paramedic Services, transitioned to the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS), as part of Ontario's "Your Health Plan." It is a modern system that more effectively uses ambulances in the County. It's also used in Toronto and Niagara Falls, B.C., and across much of the world, including England.

Sleeping in cars
Thirty people slept overnight in their vehicles March 21, 2025 as part of Places for People's Sleeping in Cars annual event. Organizers said they had raised more than $32,000 and were hopeful of meeting their goal of $40,000 before the campaign ended. P4P president Susan Tromanhauser said money raised helps maintain P4P units,

2025 year in review

Jamie Schmale re-elected.

ensuring tenants continue to have access to safe, comfortable living spaces. They can also plan for future units.

Crown lands included in this proposal will continue to be managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)."

APRIL

Ice Storm
Hydro One estimated more than 7,500 customers in Haliburton County were without power as of noon, April 2, 2025, as recovery from the weekend's ice storm continued. Work was underway at over 60 locations across the Highlands as of press time, with crews doing what they could to restore downed and damaged power lines. The company did not say when it would have power restored for most County residents, though its online outage map stated most would be back online by April 3 at 11 p.m.

Minden want province's help
Minden Hills mayor Bob Carter was hopeful the provincial government would give financial aid to the township in the wake of its declaration of a state of emergency March 31, 2025 due to the ice storm. With internet and phones down, municipal officials had to drive to Dwight to officially fax their declaration to the Ontario government. Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott toured the warming centre at the S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena April 3. Minister of emergency preparedness and response, Jill Dunlop, and Scott visited the warming centre April 6.

'No' to Land Trust
The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) said on April 14, 2025 it would not proceed with the establishment of a new conservation reserve in Haliburton County's Milburn Kendrick area. The Haliburton Highlands Land Trust had expressed interest in creating an 8,500-hectare reserve in part of the area in its Highlands Corridor. However, the ministry informed interested parties "the

Food bank demand
Minden Community Food Centre (MCFC) manager Jean Munroe said things had never been busier at the Newcastle Street pantry, reporting an 18 per cent increase in demand through the first quarter of 2025, with Tina Jackson from Central Food Network reporting similar activity in Highlands East. The two said there's been a "non-stop surge" in numbers stretching back to 2019.

MAY

Schmale wins again
Conservative MP Jamie Schmale, elected for a fourth time in the rejigged Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes riding federal election, said he noticed a major change while campaigning in the area over five weeks. "An outpouring of support and interest in politics among youth. While door knocking, I noticed young Canadians are more dialed-in than I've seen in a long time. They do care about what happens, and what decisions made today mean for their future."

National conference
Robert Pye, executive director of Watersheds Canada, said the inaugural national conference at Pinestone Resort in Haliburton was "a bit of a homecoming" for the non-profit. The event was a sellout, with 116 scientists, environmentalists, and water enthusiasts from across the continent descending May 1 and 2 for speeches, workshops, and live demonstrations from more than a dozen partnering presenters.

Pups at wolf centre
Quest, Haliburton Forest Wolf Centre's new breeding female, gave birth to two pups May 3, just in time for Mother's Day. Marena Wigmore, wolf centre and experiences manager, said the new arrivals, both black furred, one male, and one female, would make an already busy summer even more hectic. There had not been a litter since 2022, so "it's been a while," Wigmore added.

Push for cell towers
The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) said it had "a very aggressive plan" to finish the cell gap project - that will see 29 new towers, 21 upgrades, and four co-locations - by mid-2026. CEO Jason St-Pierre updated County councillors on the $300 million project, funded by Rogers, the Ontario and federal governments, and the Eastern Ontario wardens and mayors' caucuses, including the County of Haliburton.

Hope for health
It was announced a new health team would be established at the Minden Health Hub if the Kawartha Lakes-Haliburton Ontario Health Team (KLH-OHT) was chosen by the Ministry of Health. KLH-OHT was successful. It will also have teams at the Coboconk Summit Wellness Centre and Woodville Medical Clinic. It all stems form the Ontario government introducing, in January, the Primary Care Action Plan to connect every person in Ontario to primary care by 2029.

JUNE

Brewery moves.

Service delivery review
County of Haliburton CAO Gary Dyke said he wanted to continue tackling the service delivery review – tabling a fulsome report to the May 28 County council meeting. His proposal for a second phase garnered council approval. Dyke said phase two had identified engineering, communications, human resources, and planning.

Strong mayors
Minden Hills Coun. Tammy McKelvey – at a May 29 council meeting - voiced strong opposition to The Strong Mayors' Act, recently extended to Minden Hills along with 168 other smaller to medium towns May 1. McKelvey said hers was not a personal attack against mayor Bob Carter, or other designated mayors. "I feel this is very undemocratic."

Brewery makes a move
More than a year after purchasing a property in Carnarvon, Haliburton Highlands Brewing hosted its grand opening June 21. Co-owner Michael Schiedel-Webb said renovations began in January and wrapped up in April for the front of house, with a merchandise area, seating, kitchen, bar and fully-accessible washrooms. "It's cozy. Folks are liking it. We're liking the new home. We're going to see a lot of new traffic and folks who didn't realize we'd been here for 10 years," the proprietor said. Haliburton Highlands Brewing had been located at Abbey Gardens prior to its move.

Nelson leaving
Almost two years to the day since joining Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) on an interim basis, president and CEO Veronica Nelson announced she was stepping down from her position effective Sept. 5, 2025. Nelson took the reins at HHHS during a difficult time, two weeks after the shuttering of the Minden ER. She set about righting the ship, changing the culture at HHHS and improving public relations through enhanced community engagement and planning. (*Year in Review compiled by Lisa Gervais. Next week: July to December)*

Highlander community

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Sledders give back

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association (HCSA) has selected the Minden Urgent Care Clinic as its charity of the year for the 2026 season, donating $2 per hour grooming time on the the Rail Trail between Haliburton and Kinmount. The fundraiser uses a trail groomer, with billboard in tow, and the community is invited to top up with extra dollars. For six years, the HCSA has been assisting local area not-for-profits with its giving back campaign, last year supporting the Haliburton Emergency Rural SafeSpace to the tune of $2,000. To donate go to http://www.hcsa.ca *(Lisa Gervais)*

Above: The HCSA team with Marina Hodson (turquoise jacket) from Kawartha North Family Heath Team, which operates the Minden Urgent Care. *Submitted.*

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Highlander community

The gift of warm and cozy

Just before Christmas, the Great South Lake Pajama Project dropped off hundreds of pajamas to charities and organizations across the Highlands. Spokesperson Joy Webster commented, "what an incredible year – four drops and hundreds of pajamas shared with those in need, all thanks to the kindness and generosity of our community." *(Lisa Gervais)*

Above: Mrs Claus, also know as Faith Davis from South Lake, drops off pajamas at the County's women's shelter before Christmas. *Submitted.*

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Huskies forward Ryan Gosse was a leader over the holidays, with six points in six games. *Photo courtesy of OJHL Images.*

Huskies take down Spirit

By Mike Baker

The Haliburton County Huskies are the most in-form team in the Ontario Junior Hockey League (OJHL) right now, riding an 11-game point streak, which included a 3-2 win over the table-topping Stouffville Spirit in Minden Jan. 3.

The blue and white won five games and dropped one in overtime over the holidays, surging up the East Conference standings. The Huskies sit in fourth place, level on points with the Pickering Panthers in third, four back of the Trenton Golden Hawks in second, and nine behind the Spirit.

Head coach Jordan Bailey lauded his young squad for their efforts over a busy festive period, saying he felt they played a near-perfect game through two periods on home ice against Stouffville this past weekend. Goals from Julius Da Silva, Ronen Macfarlane and Brady Coe set the team up for an epic win.

"We played very well through the first 40 minutes, then in the third they came out with a big push as a first-place team would, which put us on our heels," Bailey said. "I thought we did a good job at keeping everything to the outside, blocking shots when we needed to. Owen Edwards had a really strong performance in net too, he shut the door when we really needed him," Bailey said.

There was a raucous atmosphere in the home dressing room after the win, Bailey noted.

"It was a good feeling, a very good hockey team to beat. It's nice for our guys to see that we're right up there with the top teams in the league," the coach added.

The team's holiday run began Dec. 18 with a 2-1 overtime defeat to the Oakville Blades in Minden. Daniel Tout had the Huskies' lone goal, assisted by Josh Hutton and Liam Oravsky.

It was the second 'Battle of Hwy. 35' of the season Dec. 19, with the Huskies making amends for a November loss to the Lindsay Muskies by downing them 2-1 in their own barn. Christopher Brydges got things going with his seventh goal of the season, on the powerplay, three minutes in, with Isaac Larmand doubling the advantage at 10:33. Lindsay rallied in the third, breaking Edwards' shutout a minute in through Nick Galeazza, but the Huskies dug in and came away with the win.

A four-game homestand Dec. 29 to Jan. 4 saw the Huskies rally off successive wins over the Mississauga Chargers, the Muskies, the Spirit, and Newmarket Hurricanes.

The team made a great start against the Chargers, firing 21 shots in the opening period. They only tickled the twine once, though, with Chase Del Colombo beating the impressive Owen Leonard 13 minutes into the opening frame, teed up by Liam Oravsky and Coe.

With Mississauga chasing the game, Larmand added a late empty-net goal in the third, scoring at 18:36 from Carson Durnin and Ryan Gosse. Isaiah Socha then scored for the Steelers at 18:59, giving Larmand the game-winner.

It was a back-and-forth game on New Year's Eve, with the Muskies eager to avenge their earlier defeat. Da Silva opened the scoring nine minutes into the first, assisted by Hutton and Kaiden Thatcher, but the Muskies hit back with goals from Nole Faulkner and former Husky Vincent Gazquez either side of the first intermission.

Oravsky tied the game midway through the middle frame, with Gosse adding a third seven minutes into the final period. The Muskies tied things again at the 10-minute mark, but Da Silva secured the points for the Huskies with his 12th goal of the season at 16:49, assisted by Durnin and Luis Sturgeon.

"Any time you're playing the closest team to you, and you have that little rivalry… there's a want to win that little bit more, certainly from the fans. It puts a little more pressure on the game, but it's good for our guys. They enjoyed coming away with two wins," Bailey said.

After beating Stouffville on Saturday, the Huskies followed up with a 5-4 win over Newmarket on Sunday. Goals were scored by Carter Petrie, Nic Ferrante, Kieran Raynor, Del Colombo and Larmand, who had another game-winner.

The Huskies now have a three-game road trip, visiting the Spirit Jan. 8, St. Michael's Buzzers Jan. 11 and Trenton Golden Hawks Jan. 16. They'll be home Jan. 17 for a tilt with the Aurora Tigers (6 p.m. puck drop).

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Home of the Highland Storm

Left: Hunter Hamilton scored a goal in a 2-2 tie with Mariposa. Right: Lucas Vale beats his man. *Photos by Mike Baker.*

U15 Storm impress before the holidays

The U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX team headed to Little Britain Dec. 15 to take on Mariposa, skating away with a 2–2 tie. Goals were scored by Hunter Hamilton and Brady Burke.

The team bounced back on home ice Dec. 19 when Durham travelled to Haliburton for a competitive matchup. With a strong overall effort and good pace, the U15s earned a 2–1 win in front of the home crowd. Goals came from Hudson Meyer and Cruize Neave.

The team took some time to reset and reconnect off the ice over the holidays. A mid-season team get-together included swimming and a fun change of pace as the players traded their hockey sticks for golf clubs at the golf simulator. The break was a great opportunity to recharge and build team chemistry.

Refocused and ready for the second half of the season, the U15 Rep Cheryl Smith RE/MAX team returns to action Jan. 9 at 7 p.m. at A.J. LaRue Arena in Haliburton, hosting Durham once again in what should be an exciting rematch.

SCORE BOARD

Jan. 2
U11 Carquest Minden vs Brock 3-2 L
U13 Casey's Water Well and Geothermal vs Millbrook 5-0 L
U15 The Peppermill Steak and Pasta House vs Brock 2-2T
U18 Rep Haliburton Timber Mart vs Millbrook 7-5 W

Jan. 3
U9MD Haliburton Hockey Haven vs Lakefield 5-3 W
U11 Carquest Minden vs Millbrook 8-5 L
U13 Casey's Water Well and Geothermal vs Millbrook 4-1 W
U15 Pharmasave Minden vs Sturgeon 4-3 W
U15 The Peppermill Steak and Pasta House vs Kawartha 6-1 W
U11 Carquest Minden vs Brock 12-4 W

Jan. 4
U18 Rep Haliburton Timber Mart vs Ennismore 4-2 L
U15 Pharmasave Minden vs Sturgeon 4-3 W
U18 A&W Haliburton vs Durham 4-2 W
U13 Rep Curry Chevrolet vs Orono 4-3 W

STARS of the WEEK

BRADY BURKE
Brady has found a scoring touch lately and has a strong presence in the dressing room.

LUCAS VALE
Created time and space for himself repeatedly, keeping the opposition on their toes.

JAMES GOOLEY
James had a physical presence at both ends of the ice, stepping up time and time again for his teammates.

Photos by Tim Tofflemire

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What's on

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION EVENTS

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Office open 9 a.m. to noon, clubroom closed. Bridge at 1 p.m.
Tuesdays: Games and cards night starting at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Fun darts at 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Bid euchre 1 p.m. start, Remembrance Hall. Bingo, doors open at 5 p.m. with a 7 p.m. start time, Remembrance Hall. Snack bar available from 5:30 p.m. – French fries and hot dogs available while supplies last.
Thursdays: General meeting third Thursday of the month, ladies auxiliary meeting last Thursday of the month.
Fridays: Meat draw, five draws, five prizes each draw, first draw at 4:30 p.m., last draw at 6:30 p.m., tickets $2 per draw. Paul Sisson, MC. Friday fun darts 4:30 p.m. onwards. 50/50 draw at 5 p.m., tickets are $1 and available in the clubroom. Board games for seniors from 10 a.m. to noon.
Saturdays: Open only for special events. Clubroom hours: Monday 3-9 p.m., Tues 5-9 p.m., Wed/Thurs 3-6 p.m., Fri 3-7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday closed.

Royal Canadian Legion - Mabel D. Brannigan Branch 636 Minden

Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Monday to Thursday** with regular menu and daily special including Liver Lovers' **Tuesday**.
Friday Fish & Chips & Wings. Lunch 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and dinner 4-7 p.m.
Saturday all day breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541
Weekly activities:
Karaoke: call for dates
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week.
Monday: Euchre 1-3 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1-3 p.m., Darts 7-9 p.m. and euchre 7-9 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 624 Wilberforce

Monday: open 7 to 10 p.m. There's darts Jan.5, 12, 19, and 26 at 7 p.m. Cost is $5 per player.
Tuesday: closed, special events only. Jan. 20 and 27 is seniors exercise club at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday: open 2 to 10 p.m. Jan. 7, 14, 21 and 28 is darts at 2 p.m. $5/player. There's also quick supper from 5 to 6:30 p.m., with the menu changing weekly. Cost is $10 per person. And open cribbage starts at 6:30 p.m., no need to pre-register.
Thursday: open 2 to 10 p.m. HHHS social rec Jan. 8 and 22 at 10 a.m.
Friday: open 2 to 11 p.m. Jan. 9 and 23 is wings and jam session from 5 to 8 p.m. Cost is $15 per pound. Jan. 9 and 23 is community care 55+ lunch at noon, cost is $17 per person. Jan. 16 and 30 is fish and chips from 5 to 8 p.m. One piece is $15, two pieces is $20.
Saturday: open 2 to 9 p.m. Meat draw Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31 at 3 p.m. Jan. 24 is the Pat and Phyllis Gallen Lake Trout Ice Fishing Derby, weigh-in at 3 p.m. Karaoke also Jan. 24 at 8 p.m. Jan. 31 is trivia night at 7 p.m., cost is $5 per player.
Sunday: closed, special events only. Jan. 11 LA Breakfast from 9-11 a.m. Cost is $10 per person.

EVENTS

Jan. 8, 4:15 p.m. Those Other Movies returns with a screening of *The Marching Band* at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion. The francophone flick tells the story of an acclaimed orchestra conductor who, after learning about a cancer diagnosis, is united with a brother he didn't know existed. Tickets are $10 at the door. A second screening is set for 7:15 p.m.

Jan. 11, 6-9 p.m. Medeba is hosting an indoor community climbing experience at its location at 1270 Kennisis Lake Road. There are a range of routes for all levels of climbers. Cost is $15 per person, with shoe rentals available for $5. No registration necessary, just drop in. Also running Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1 and 8.

Jan. 12, 7 to 9 p.m. Community Coffee House begins its new season in the Schofield Room at the Haliburton Legion, with live music by Gord Kidd followed by a presentation on supporting adults with developmental and physical challenges. Learn about how to obtain support workers, respite care, and passport funding for activities. Open to all, no admission, light refreshments available. Sponsored by the Baha'I Community of Haliburton County. For more information, call 416-606-9657.

Jan. 13, 7 p.m. Environment Haliburton! welcomes Basil Conlin of Haliburton Micromeadows as the guest speaker at its upcoming enviro-café. Conlin will be discussing ecological foundations, walking people through how to understand the role of grasses, rushes and sedges. Register in advance at environmenthaliburton.org.

Jan. 14, 7 to 9 p.m. Telling Our Stories Speaker Series returns with Russ Wunker at the HHOA fish hatchery as he unpacks the history of Miners' Bay. Tickets are $15 per person, available online through tellingourstories.company.site.

Jan. 15, 1 to 3 p.m. Haliburton Highlands Writers and Editors Network meeting at the Minden branch of the Haliburton County Public Library. Gather and meet members, read stories, general news. For more information contact Kay Millard at 705-286-6635. Meetings run the third Thursday of each month.

Jan. 15, 2 to 3 p.m. The Dysart branch of the Haliburton County Public Library is hosting a free hands-on winter landscape needle felting workshop. Learn how to make snowy hills, evergreen trees and starry skies. All materials provided. Registration required, call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca. Also offered at the Minden Hills branch Jan. 21 from 2 to 3 p.m. and the Dorset library Jan. 30 from 1 to 2 p.m.

Jan. 17, 2 to 3 p.m. The Dysart branch of the Haliburton County Public Library is hosting a how to care for houseplants workshop. An expert will guide you through the basics, including watering, lighting, repotting, soil types, common pests and easy troubleshooting tips. Registration required, call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca.

Jan. 22, 11 a.m. to noon, join the Highland Grove library for its Savouring Stories offering. Each month, we explore the world of food through stories, history, shared experiences, and cooking. No registration required.

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What's on

The last Dogsled Derby at the Pinestone was in 2020. *File.*

Mushers making return to Pinestone for dogsled derby

By Lisa Gervais

Haliburton's Pinestone Resort is going back to the dogs – as Winterdance Dogsled Tours brings its dogsled derby back after a five-year hiatus.

The last iteration was in 2020, before COVID-19 put the brakes on the dogs.

Winterdance co-owner Tanya McCready said they had never planned for the popular event not to return after the pandemic. However, there were poor winter conditions, and a missed season due to the Winterdance team being involved in filming for *Frankenstein.*

McCready said the Pinestone reached out in the fall to ask if they would think about bringing it back.

She said with last winter bringing tons of snow and this year looking favourable for the Jan. 24-25 weekend, they said yes.

McCready added "every year, I get notes from the mushers saying please tell us Haliburton is coming back because there are so few races left."

McCready said when she and Hank DeBruin first got into dogsledding, there was a race every winter weekend in Ontario, and sometimes two. Now, she said there is one in Kearney and South River has started a race.

The Winterdance co-lead said mushers love the Pinestone because it is the only place they can stay and race at the same venue.

The event was staged for 16 years at the Pinestone and will be heading into its 20th year in 2027.

McCready said, "we never got to build it as big as we originally wanted it to … so we thought let's see what we can do … keep it simple this year, and if all goes well, next year we'll go bigger."

She said DeBruin and his team have been working on the trails for a few weeks.

"The same races will be back that we've always had; the four dog, six dog, eight dog, skijoring, and the crowd favourite, the kid and mutt. She added there would be a youth race and a two-dog novice race.

She noted the latter is "because the sport has changed so much. It used to be four and six dog classes were huge and eight was decent but because of the cost of having a lot of dogs now, there are a lot of people who just have two to three dogs, so the two-dog class has become a huge class in Kearney. We had quite a few in 2020."

She said they are still seeking sponsors and are not even sure they will have prize money as they have put the event together hastily. And while they already have volunteers, they can always use more. There will be no on-site vendors, but Pinestone's restaurant will be open. As always, the event is free to the public, who can turn up between 9:30-10 a.m. both days.

There will be a few locals to watch, and McCready expects a good contingent of out-of-towners. In the past, they have attracted mushers from all over Ontario, parts of Quebec and the northern U.S.

McCready promised: "two great days of tons of dogs and lots of happy people."

Go to haliburtondogsledderby.com for more.

Do you have newspapers from before 1980?

The Haliburton Highlands Digital Archive is seeking copies of old Haliburton County newspapers to complete their digital collection.

If you have local newspapers from before 1980 please visit **www.hhda.ca** for information on how to submit your papers to be included in the digital archive.

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NOTICE

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETINGS - Sundays - 10:30 am at St. Anthony's, 27 Victoria Street Haliburton. Wednesdays - 7:00 PM at Highland Hills United Church, 21 Newcastle St. in Minden - rear door. Thinking about alcohol. Thinking about stopping. We've been there. We can help!

NOTICE

AL ANON- WE CARE, are you troubled by someone's drinking? Meetings: Thursdays 7 p.m., St. Anthony's 27 Victoria Street, Haliburton, and Mondays 7 p.m. at Highland Hills United Church, 21 Newcastle, Rear Entrance, Minden. 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666) al-anon.org All are welcome.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS Admission is free and the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. This meeting is for addicts only. New meeting in Haliburton that meets every Thursday from 7:30-8:30 p.m. at 83 Maple Ave. Unit 7A in Haliburton Halco Plaza, behind Castle Antiques. For more information and an online version visit www.cloana.org or call 1-888-811-3887

HELP WANTED

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JOB POSTING

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The ideal candidate will have 1-3 years' experience working in a mental health setting or 1-3 years' experience working in an administrative role in mental health or medical setting. They should have experience working with an electronic medical records system and have exceptional confidentiality awareness skills and understanding of PHIPA.

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Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than January 16, 2026.

We thank all who apply for this position; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

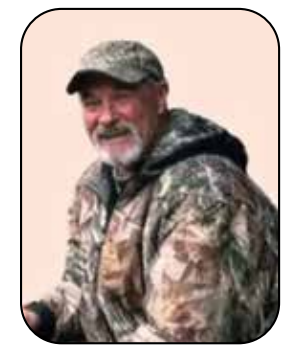
The County of Haliburton is an equal employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.

OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

John "Dutchie" Colwell



With deep sadness, we announce the sudden passing of Dutchie, in his 71st year, at Lakeridge Health Oshawa, surrounded by his loving immediate family, after a short, intense battle with Lymphoma Blood Cancer and an unknown weakened heart condition.

Dutchie will be deeply missed by his wife, Mary (nee Cascagnette). Loved father to Clayton (Marielle) and Kristine (Gabriel). Grandpa to Hailey and Hunter. Predeceased by both parents, Robert & Anne, and parents-in-law Lawrence & Charlotte. Dutchie leaves behind brother David (Jacqueline), sisters-in-law Rosemary (the late Larry), Joan (Greg), and brothers-in-law Brian (Jane), and Paul. Uncle to Melissa (Tyler), Travis, Gary (Christy), Nicholas (Brittney), Paul (Katherine), Joshua, Danielle (Josh), Courtney, and Brittney (Kyle). Great-Uncle to Zachary, Jayden, Izabella, Calvin, Emery, Tucker, and Tristan.

Dutchie was born in Herefordshire, England, on November 19, 1954. He moved to Canada in 1957 and settled in Bowmanville in 1963.

Whether fishing quiet lakes, walking the Haliburton Forest trails, riding snowmobiles or side by sides, hunting with patience and respect, watching the sun rise and set, or simply sitting by a campfire sharing stories, Dutchie felt most at home in the "natural" world.

Many have learnt from him how to bait a hook, read the weather, and track a trail of footprints. But his most proudest accomplishments were being a loving husband of over 41 years, an amazing dad for 37 years, and an adoring Grandpa for 7 years. His smile and happy whistling will be missed and always remembered by many family, friends, and pets.

Special thank you to all of our family and friends, Bowmanville Legion Branch 178, and the wonderful team at Lakeridge Health Oshawa, who provided great support over the last few months.

Visitation will be held on Friday, January 16, 2026, at Northcutt Elliott Funeral Home, 53 Division Street, Bowmanville, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 17, 2026, from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Bowmanville Legion Branch 178, 109 King Street, Bowmanville.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre in Oshawa and/or to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. You are also welcome to plant a tree in memory of Dutchie's love of nature.

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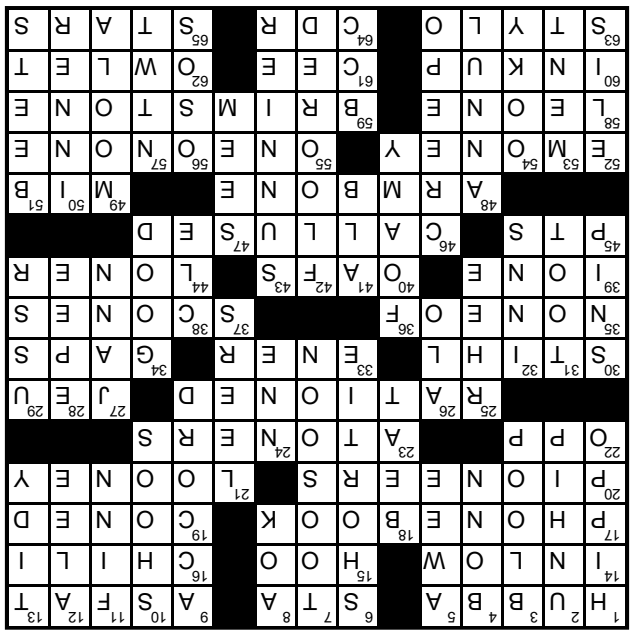
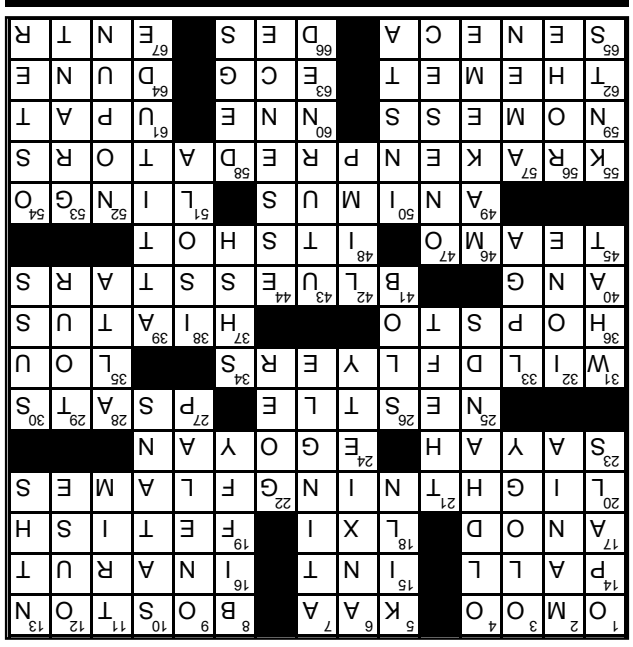
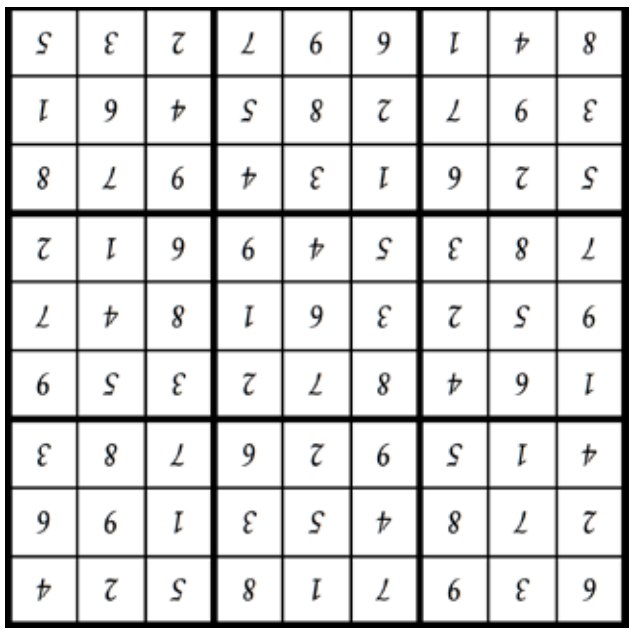


THIS WEEK'S SOLUTIONS





OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Edward "Fast Eddie" Sidney Burke

(Retired from the Canadian Armed Forces at the rank of Sgt and was a former jail guard with the local OPP)

Passed away peacefully at the Haliburton Hospital on Saturday, December 27, 2025 with his loving wife by his side in his 86th year.

Beloved husband and friend of Sheila Arlene Burke (nee Watt) for 52 years. Dear son of the late Hugh and Edna (nee Watson) Burke. Loving brother of twin sisters, Phyllis (Lucien) Douville and Eunice Burke (the late Rod Leach). Fondly remembered by his nieces; Paulette (Todd) Francoeur, Denise Douville (Mark Johns), Michelle (Garett) Keirns, by his nephew Will Richardson and also by their families.

In keeping with Ed's wishes, cremation has taken place and a Celebration of his Life will be held in the spring of 2026 followed by an interment at the Evergreen Cemetery, Haliburton.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) or to the Minden Health Care Auxiliary would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario KoM 2Ko.

www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com

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In Loving Memory of

Bob James

August 18, 1947 - Dec 29, 2025

Born in Bowmanville, Ontario to John and Dorothy James, passed peacefully in Haliburton at the age of 78, with family in his home of 50 years.

Bob is survived by his 3 sons, Sam, Mason, Ben, daughter in law Marcedes and grand-daughter Storii, his brother Rick, in laws, nieces, nephews, and many friends.

Bob had come to Haliburton in 1972 pursuing careers as a teacher, a builder, and a purposeful life among nature.

Bob was a proud father, gifted golfer and billiards player, uniquely intelligent and funny, prioritized fitness into his old age, and loved to party.

He tended to his property, the wildlife, and helped his children navigate their lives and careers.

An outdoor service will be held with close friends and family at his home in the spring to celebrate his life and story.

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In Loving Memory of

Joyce Guiotto

(nee Angiers)

Born, raised and life long resident of Coboconk Ontario passed peacefully surrounded by the love of her family at Victoria Manor on Thursday December 18th 2025, in her 88th year. Joyce was the loving wife of the late Otto (2016), and loving Grandma of Dylan (2016). Loving mother of Darryl Brenda (2024), Peter and Catrina (Scott Cole). Fondly remembered by her grandchildren Breanna (Matt), Angelina (Cody), Cody, Kyle, and by her great-grandchildren Ava, Quinton, Aiden, Hudson, Jasper and Olivia. Dear sister of Deb, Morley Liscombe (2016). Predeceased by brothers and sisters Joe and Betty, Gloria and Carmen and Paul. Joyce had many careers, beginning with waitressing, factory work and then became a stay at home Mom. In later years, she returned to work with her sister in retail. Joyce loved bingo, going to the casino, birdwatching, but most of all, her children. She was also greatly loved by many nieces, nephews, and her sister-in-law, Cheryle and daughter-in-law Michelle.

Visitation & Funeral Service

Friends and family are invited to call at **TRINITY FULL GOSPEL CHURCH** 6643 Hwy. #35, Coboconk, Ontario on Tuesday morning, December 23, 2025 for a Funeral Service at 12 o'clock (Noon). Visitation two hours prior. Interment Pine Grove Cemetery, Norland. As an expression of sympathy, donations to a charity of your choice would be appreciated by the family. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the **COBOCONK COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME** 6644 Hwy. #35, Coboconk, Ontario (705) 457-9209.

In Loving Memory of

Stanley "Stan" Watt

Resident of Haliburton

With deep love and gratitude for a life well lived, the family of Stan announces his peaceful passing into the presence of the Lord on Saturday, Dec 27, 2025, at the age of 87, surrounded by loved ones. Beloved Husband of Phyllis Watt (nee Bowron).

Born on March 9, 1938, in the County of Haliburton, Stan was the eldest son of 5 children of Phurness Watt and Marjorie Parish Watt. He began his early years in Victoria Street School in Haliburton. After this, he worked in the family grocery store, then at the lumber mill in Wilberforce before becoming an employee of the GM Boys Club at 18yrs old. There, his faith and values were shaped and deepened after his commitment to Jesus at the Salvation Army. As a devoted follower of Christ, Stan lived out his faith daily through his kindness, generosity, and prayerful spirit.

He served others with humility and grace, reflecting God's love in conversation and in powerful ways. Stan found joy in teasing the neighborhood children while fixing bikes, volunteering and helping others, time with family, enjoying the outdoors, and cherished the blessings of faith, family, and community.

He is lovingly remembered by his children: Rob (Catherine), Chris (Peggy), Teresa (Karl), grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. His legacy of faith, love, and compassion will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.

Visitation & Funeral Service

Friends and family are invited to call on Tuesday Morning, January 6, 2026, at 12:00 (Noon) at the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME**, 13523 Hwy #118 Haliburton, ON KoM 1So (705) 457-9209 for a Service in Stan's memory (Visitation 2 hours prior.) As an expression of sympathy donations in Stan's memory can be made to the Haliburton 4Cs Foodbank.

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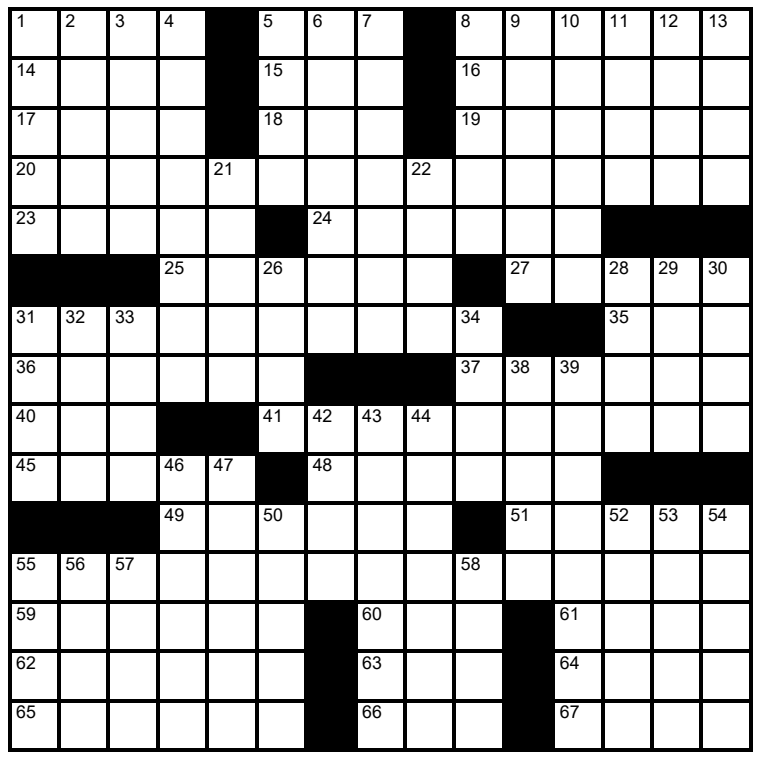

Across

1 Melville's book before "Moby Dick"
5 Kipling's hypnotic snake
8 City nicknamed Beantown
14 Gloomy aura
15 Fixed or variable chg.
16 Doing the same-old same-old
17 ... wink and ___
18 C-XXXIX
19 Weird interest in, as shoes
20 Hockey team named for electrical storm fires?
23 Respond during a massage, or a throat exam
24 Canadian director of "Ararat"
25 Get snuggly
27 High school exams, for short
31 Hockey team named for airshow daredevils?
35 Skip to My ___ (kid's song)
36 Gets on the job, pronto
37 Break in the action
40 "The Hulk" director Lee
41 Hockey teams named for famous jazzy singers?
45 "Je t'aime," in Spain
48 Five-alarm chili eater's cry, maybe
49 Feeling of ill will
51 Biz jargon
55 Hockey team named for sea monster hunters?
59 E-Z clean
60 180° from SSW
61 ___ the crack of dawn
62 N.Y.C. opera house, for short
63 Cardio exam
64 Desert hill
65 Iroquois name of a Toronto college
66 Lac ___ Bois (N.W.T. lake)
67 ___ 'acte

Down

1 Gems thought to prevent disease, to ancient Greeks
2 Uber fan's frenzy
3 Any science, informally
4 Seasoned pros
5 Potter's studio fixture
6 Nervous feeling
7 All excited with anticipation
8 Outhouse
9 First of 16, in speed skating
10 "To save us all from ___ power" (carol lyric)
11 Modest request at a hair salon
12 River feeding the Trent
13 Advanced degrees?
21 Taking things the wrong way?
22 Attendee, as at a theatre or party
26 Belcher at a tea party, say
28 Danielle Smith's prov.
29 "Guided" outing
30 Investigate, with "out"
31 Word from the hard-of-hearing, maybe
32 "Say Anything" actress Skye
33 Links org. for women
34 Baby-soothing sounds
38 Island, in Italy
39 A pessimist's is negative, often
42 Weak, as a handshake
43 Pulled a one-eighty
44 Central idea
46 Sassy challenge to a command
47 "Just a jiff!"
50 App with a camera icon, for short
52 "___ intended"
53 Government seed money
54 Cuisinart rival
55 Dubbed officers: Abbr.
56 Architect Mies van der ___
57 Prayer ender
58 B.A. and B.S., e.g.

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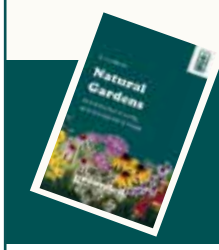

For a free guide to natural gardens in Haliburton County, visit groundedgardens.ca.

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